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Grant Will Aid UNH Faculty In Assessing Student Learning Outcomes Of New Discovery Program

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DURHAM, N.H. - The University of New Hampshire has received a \$190,873 grant from the Davis Educational Foundation that provides support for the development and implementation of a faculty-guided assessment plan for the Discovery Program's first-year inquiry seminars. The Discovery Program is UNH's redesigned general education program in the second of a six year implementation.

A critical feature of the program is a set of first-year inquiry seminars, designed to develop skills that will serve students well throughout their time at UNH. Inquiry seminars are intended to help students become proficient in asking good questions, applying appropriate methodologies, evaluating evidence, and formulating conclusions.

"The first-year experience essentially is the starting point for the entire inquiry-based program culminating in a capstone experience within a student's major," explains Joanne Curran-Celentano, co-director of the Discovery Program. "The grant will allow us to assess how students learn, the kinds of questions they ask, the processes they use to arrive at an understanding of a subject."

Funding will be used to provide UNH professors with faculty development opportunities which will, in turn, lead to an assessment protocol for the new courses. Over three years, up to 18 UNH faculty will study assessment techniques and they, in turn, will share their findings with additional faculty.

"Assessment is an ongoing process throughout the curriculum at UNH and though different learning takes place in art history and mechanical engineering, we do want a set of common outcomes that are in keeping with the goals of the Discovery Program," Curran-Celentano says. "The goal is to see an emergent culture of assessment that we expect will result in improved learning outcomes for all UNH students."

The Davis Education Foundation was established by Stanton and Elizabeth Davis after his retirement as chairman of Shaw's Supermarkets, Inc.